

Joint Committees

Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

The annual governance and accountability return on pages 2 to 7 is made up of four sections:

- Sections 1 and 2 are completed by the person nominated by the Joint Committee
- Section 3 is completed by Mazars LLP as the reviewer appointed by the Joint Committee.
- In addition, the internal audit report is completed by the Joint Committee's internal audit provider.

Each Joint Committee must approve Section 1 and Section 2.

Completing your annual governance and accountability return

Guidance notes, including a completion checklist, are provided on page 7 and at relevant points in the annual governance and accountability return.

Please complete all highlighted sections. Please do not leave any highlighted box blank. Incomplete or incorrect returns require additional work and so may incur additional costs.

Please send the annual governance and accountability return, together with your bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024, an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements and any additional information requested, to us, Mazars LLP by the due date.

We will identify and ask for any additional documents needed for our work. Therefore, unless requested, do not send any original financial records.

Once we have completed our work, the certified annual governance and accountability return will be returned to the Joint Committee for publication and public display of Sections 1, 2 and 3. It is recommended that you publish and display the annual governance and accountability return, including the external auditor's report, by 30 September 2024.

****Please note that this annual governance and accountability return is a variant of the version produced by JPAG for parish councils and other smaller authorities. As joint committees are not covered by JPAG's Practitioner's Guide it does not part of proper practice defined in the Practitioner's Guide.***

Guidance notes on completing the 2023/24 return

1. Please make sure that your annual governance and accountability return is complete (ie no empty highlighted boxes), and is properly signed and dated. Avoid making amendments to the completed return. Any amendments must be approved by the Joint Committee, properly initialled and explanation provided. Annual governance and accountability return's containing unexplained or unapproved amendments may be returned and incur additional costs.
2. **Joint Committees must approve Section 1 on page 2 before approving Section 2 on page 3.**
3. Please use the checklist provided below. Use a second pair of eyes, perhaps a member of the committee or the Chair, to review your return for completeness before sending it to us. Do not send us any information not specifically asked for. Doing so is not helpful. However, you must notify us of any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair.
4. Please make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation confirming the balance held on your behalf which you send with the return covers all your bank balances. If the Joint Committee holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. We must be able to agree your bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (Section 2 on page 3). You must provide an explanation for any difference between Box 7 and Box 8.
5. Please explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on page 3. Do not just send in a copy of your detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. We want to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include a complete numerical and narrative analysis to support your explanation.
6. If we have to review unsolicited information, or receive an incomplete bank reconciliation, or you do not fully explain variances, this may incur additional costs for which we will make a charge.
7. Please make sure that your accounting statements add up and the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2023) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2024).
8. Please do not complete section 3. We will complete it at the conclusion of our work.

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Done?
All sections	All highlighted boxed have been completed?	
	All additional information requested has been provided to us?	✓
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', an explanation is provided?	✓
Section 2	Joint Committee approval of the accounting statements is confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	
	An explanation of significant variations from last year to this year is provided?	✓
	Bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2024 agrees to Box 8?	✓
	An explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 is provided?	✓
Internal Audit Report	All highlighted boxed completed by internal audit and explanations provided?	✓

Section 1 – Annual Governance statement 2023/24

We acknowledge as the members of:

Enter name of
Joint Committee here:

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2024, that:

	Agreed		'Yes'
	Yes	No*	Means that the Joint Committee has:
1 We approved the accounting statements prepared in accordance with the guidance notes within this Return	✓		Prepared its accounting statements and approved them.
2 We maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3 We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with generally accepted good practice that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of the body to conduct its business or on its finances and have reported our financial results to our host authority for inclusion in their accounts.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with generally accepted good practice.
4 We carried out an assessment of the risks facing the Joint Committee and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered the financial and other risks it faces and has dealt with them properly.
5 We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of the Joint Committee.
6 We took appropriate action on all matters raised during the year in reports from internal and external reviews.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external reviewers.
7 We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the Joint Committee and where appropriate have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year-end if relevant.

The annual governance statement is approved by this Joint Committee on:

and recorded as minute reference:

Signed by Chair at meeting where approval is given:

Clerk:

*Note: Please provide explanations to us on a separate sheet for each 'No' response. Describe how the Joint Committee will address the weaknesses identified.

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 for

Enter name of
Joint Committee here:

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee

	Year ending		Notes and guidance Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank, and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.
	31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £	
1 Balances brought forward	2,257,967	2,249,344	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2 (+) Income from local taxation	0	0	Total amount of local tax received or receivable in the year including funding from a sponsoring body. Exclude any grants received.
3 (+) Total other receipts	2,120,165	2,242,708	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the taxation and/or levy (line 2). Include any grants received here.
4 (-) Staff costs	402,392	381,389	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include salaries and wages, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and employment expenses.
5 (-) Loan Interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and Interest made during the year on the body's borrowings (if any).
6 (-) All other payments	1,726,395	1,737,503	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan Interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7 (=) Balances carried forward	2,249,344	2,373,161	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) – (4+5+6)
8 Total cash and short term investments	2,289,336	2,631,809	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – to agree with bank reconciliation.
9 Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	4,855,777	4,960,875	This cell shows the value of all the property the Joint committee owns. It is made up of its fixed assets and long-term investments.
10 Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB)

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2024 the accounting statements in the annual governance and accountability return present fairly the financial position of the Joint Committee and its income and expenditure, or properly present receipts and payments, as the case may be.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer:

[Redacted Signature]

Date

[Redacted Date]

I confirm that these accounting statements were approved by the Joint Committee on:

[Redacted Date]

and recorded as minute reference:

[Redacted Reference]

Signed by Chair of meeting where approval is given:

[Redacted Signature]

Annual internal audit report 2023/24 to

Enter name of Joint Committee here:

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee

The Joint Committee's internal audit service provider, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

Internal audit has been carried out in accordance with the Joint Committee's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Joint Committee.

Internal control objective	Agreed? Please choose one of the following		
	Yes	No*	Not covered / applicable**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been kept properly throughout the year.	✓		
B. The Joint Committee met its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. The Joint Committee assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The annual taxation or levy or funding requirements resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with the Joint Committee's approval, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic and year-end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		

For any other risk areas identified by the Joint Committee adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas below or on separate sheets if needed) adequate controls existed:

N/A

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: Nicola Cooke

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit:  Date: 01/05/2024

*Note: If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned, or, if coverage is not required, internal audit must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 3 – External Report 2023/24 Certificate

In respect of:

Enter name of
Joint Committee here:

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee

Respective responsibilities of the Joint Committee and the reviewer

The Joint Committee has taken on the responsibility of ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The Joint Committee prepares a return which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2024; and
- confirms and provides assurance on various governance matters in accordance with generally accepted good practice.

This report has been produced in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter dated 16 April 2024 ("the Engagement Letter") and in accordance with the International Standard on Related Services 4400 applicable to agreed-upon-procedures engagements as published by IAASB.

We have performed the following work in respect of the annual governance and accountability return prepared by the Joint Committee:

- agreed the bank reconciliation to the annual governance and accountability return and bank statements;
- agreed the annual governance and accountability return to the trial balance or ledger;
- ensured the trial balance and accounting statements add up;
- agreed any precept or other income from local taxation / levy to the funding body;
- agreed any loans to the Public Works Loan Board or whoever the loan is with;
- checked the comparative figures to prior year accounts;
- undertook an analytical review of the figures and investigated variances above agreed tolerance levels;
- ensured that the accounting statements and annual governance statement have been signed and dated as required;
- investigated any no answers in the Annual Governance Statement; and
- investigated any no answers in the Internal Audit Report.

[No exceptions were found / Apart from the following exceptions, noted below, no exceptions were found]

We have not subjected the information contained in our report to checking or verification procedures except to the extent expressly stated above and this engagement does not constitute an audit or a review and, as such, no assurance is expressed. Had we performed additional procedures, an audit or a review, other matters might have come to light that would have been reported.

You were responsible for determining whether the agreed upon procedures we performed were sufficient for your purposes and we cannot, and do not, make any representations regarding the sufficiency of these procedures for your purposes.

Our report is prepared solely for the confidential use of the Joint Committee. Our report must not be used for any purpose other than for which it was prepared or be reproduced or referred to in any other document or made available to any third party without the written permission of Mazars LLP.

We accept no liability to any other party who is shown or gains access to this report.

Signature

Mazars LLP, Newcastle, NE1 1DF

Date